

The Effect of Repeated Allergen Exposure on Voice

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Introduction

While voice is often thought of as an inherited trait, environmental irritants play a decisive role in the development of voice. While these environmental irritants are generally all considered to have a deleterious effect on voice, not all environmental irritants produce undesired outcomes.

Abstract

In order for an individual to have a good singing voice, it is often said that they must have pliable vocal cords. In order for them to have a good speaking voice, they must have slightly stiffer vocal cords but those cords must be smoother.

Exposure to allergens and particularly, exposure to cat dander for those who have an allergy, may be key to the development of vocal cords which are especially smooth. Repeated cycles of mild inflammation result not in scarring, but in a smoothing of tissue. While more serious inflammation e.g. a chemical burn results in scarring which actually detracts from smoothness, it is important to understand that vocal cords are not naturally perfectly smooth. They are essentially tendons which consist of a great many smaller fibers, which means that the overall cord structure is not entirely smooth.

Conclusion

Many years of exposure to an allergen such a cat dander may, in fact, be the key to the success of many smooth-voiced radio personalities over the years.